

# A Path-Analytic Study of a Model of Salesperson Performance

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*Researchers have been giving increased attention to determinants of salesperson performance. Despite this research interest, empirical work has generally ignored interrelationships among the determinants of salesperson performance. This paper reports the results of a study that focused on predictors of salesperson performance and the relationships among these predictors. The investigation included variables previously examined in sales management research as well as variables heretofore not investigated.*

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Walker, Churchill, and Ford (1977) have developed and revised (1979) a model of salesperson performance. They posit that salespeople's performance is a function of motivation; aptitude; skill level; role perceptions; and personal, organizational, and environmental variables. Performance, in turn, produces rewards which lead to job satisfaction. A plethora of research has examined various components of this model, such as motivation (e.g., Teas 1981; Tyagi 1982), role perceptions (e.g., Teas, Wacker, and Hughes 1979; Teas 1980, 1983), rewards (Churchill, Ford, and Walker 1979; Ingram and Bellenger 1983), job satisfaction (Teas 1980, 1981), and performance (Bagozzi 1978, 1980). These investigations have been useful in expanding our knowledge of the determinants of salesperson performance. In addition, by identifying limitations of the model and gaps in present knowledge, the studies provide explicit directions for future research efforts.

For example, researchers (Soldow and Thomas 1984; Weitz 1981) have suggested recently that present explana-

tions of salesperson performance may be improved by including at least one other factor: salesperson adaptability (i.e., ability to alter one's behavior to fit the selling interaction). As Weitz (1981, p. 89) notes:

[Prior] research has ignored the unique advantage of personal selling in a company's marketing mix communication. Salespeople have the opportunity to match their behavior to the specific customer and situation they encounter. They can consider each interaction individually and present themselves and their product so as to be maximally effective in that interaction.

Despite its potential explanatory power, contemporary investigations have not considered the impact of this variable on salesperson performance. (For a review of studies that have explored determinants of salesperson performance, see Churchill et al. 1985, Comer and Dubinsky 1985, and Weitz 1979).

With respect to the gaps in our present knowledge, minimal published research has investigated interrelationships among the variables in the Walker, Churchill, and Ford (1979) model. Thus, much additional empirical work is needed to clarify our understanding of the linkages proposed in Walker, Churchill, and Ford's (1979) model.

The present investigation explores these issues as well as the effects of salesperson adaptability. More specifically, the study examines linkages between salesperson role conflict, role ambiguity, work motivation, overall job satisfaction, and job performance. Furthermore, the research extends prior empirical work through the inclusion of two additional variables: job involvement and organizational commitment. Job involvement is included because of its reported links to employee job satisfaction, motivation, and turnover propensity in the psychology and organizational behavior literature (Rabinowitz and Hall 1977); organizational commitment, because of its reported link with job satisfaction (Porter and Steers 1973). In addition, previous research is further ex-

tended by focusing on the effects of salesperson self-monitoring – (adapting oneself to situational cues) – which suggests how adaptive a salesperson might be during interactions with customers. Self-monitoring has been explored by psychologists (e.g., Snyder 1974) but has not been investigated in a sales setting. Sales researchers, though, have suggested that the concept may be applicable in personal selling (Soldow and Thomas 1984; Weitz 1981).

**HYPOTHESIZED MODEL**

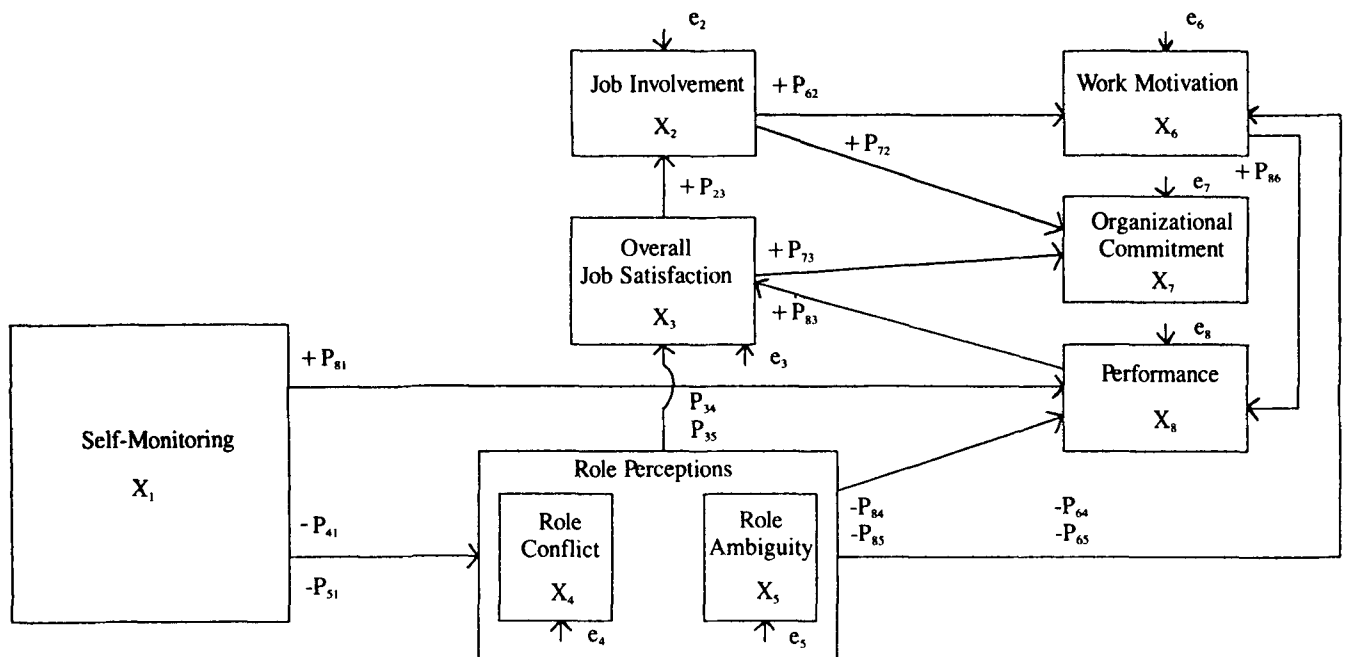
The model examined is depicted in Figure 1. Hypothesized relationships among the variables in Figure 1 are indicated by plus and minus signs. Variables in the model are defined and interrelationships among them are discussed below.

1. *Self-monitoring*: the degree to which individuals respond to others (or adapt their behavior) based upon “situational cues to social appropriateness” (Snyder 1974, p. 526).
2. *Job involvement*: the degree to which individuals identify psychologically with, or are committed to, their jobs.
3. *Overall job satisfaction*: the effective reactions employees have toward their work situation.
4. *Role conflict*: the degree to which employees encounter incompatible job demands or expectations from their role partners (e.g., peers, management, customers) that cannot be satisfied simultaneously.
5. *Role ambiguity*: the degree to which individuals have inadequate knowledge or information with which to perform their jobs.
6. *Work motivation*: the degree to which employees are willing to expend effort on the job.
7. *Organizational commitment*: employees’ propensity to stay (or reluctance to leave) the organization.
8. *Job performance*: the degree to which employees execute their job tasks, responsibilities, and assignments adequately.

**Effects of Self-Monitoring**

When individuals interact, they often attempt to influence the images that others form of them. Each person in the interaction generally will seek to maintain an image that is germane to the given social situation and will be viewed favorably by others. To accomplish these objectives, individuals are required to control their self-presentation and

**FIGURE 1  
HYPOTHESIZED MODEL**



thereby engage in "impression management" (Goffman 1959). Social interaction, then, "requires the ability to manage or control our verbal and nonverbal self-presentation to foster desired images in the eyes of our beholders" (Snyder 1979, p. 182).

People differ in the degree to which they can and do control their self-presentations, or engage in *self-monitoring*. An individual who is high in self-monitoring has been defined as follows (Snyder 1980, p. 6):

The prototypic *high self-monitoring individual* is one who, out of concern for situational and interpersonal appropriateness of his or her social behavior, is particularly sensitive to the expression and self-presentation of relevant others in social situations and uses these cues as guidelines for self-monitoring (that is, regulating and controlling) his or her own verbal and nonverbal self-presentation.

Thus, in contrast to low self-monitors, high self-monitoring individuals are more attentive to social cues, adapt their behaviors more readily to the situation, and are less likely to employ internal beliefs as behavioral guidelines.

Self-monitoring should be a particularly relevant concept in personal selling. Whether a salesperson is interacting with customers, management, fellow salespeople, or other company personnel, the ability to control effectively verbal and nonverbal behavior based upon situational cues should facilitate such interactions.

*Self-Monitoring and Role Perceptions.* Although no published research has explored the relationships between self-monitoring and role perceptions, it is conceivable that these constructs might be related. When sales personnel experience role conflict, they receive incompatible demands or expectations from their role-set members. High self-monitors are attentive to social cues and adapt their behavior to fit the situation. Because of the ability to respond appropriately to the situation, high self-monitoring salespeople may be able to reconcile the disparate demands placed upon them by focusing solely on social cues that require a response and ignoring irrelevant cues; thus, these salespeople may not perceive role conflict as a serious problem but merely a perfunctory phenomenon. Conversely, high self-monitoring sales personnel may have higher levels of role conflict because they are likely to perceive numerous social cues that originate from a variety of sources and thus may be uncertain about which cues are relevant and require a response. The above arguments suggest that self-monitoring should be included in the model, but no a priori sign can be specified.

When salespeople are uncertain about how to perform their jobs, they experience role ambiguity. High self-monitors are sensitive to social cues and may use these cues as guidelines for their behavior. By engaging in self-monitoring, salespeople may be able to glean information from their social situations that will assist them in the performance of their jobs. Consequently, they will be obtaining insights into how they are expected to perform, thus reducing their role

ambiguity. Based upon this rationale, a negative association between self-monitoring and role ambiguity is hypothesized.

*Self-Monitoring and Performance.* Salespeople are boundary spanners (Belasco 1966; Donnelly and Ivancevich 1975; Walker, Churchill, and Ford 1972) who interact with people from within and outside their organizations. As such, their job requires filtering and transferring of information across organizational boundaries. Consequently:

These individuals must therefore be able to respond to a variety of informational and social stimuli, both inside and outside the organization. The success of a boundary spanner is, therefore, likely to be influenced by the degree to which individuals can accurately perceive and adapt to a variety of social situations. In short, if an individual is sensitive to and can respond to a variety of possibly divergent social cues, that individual should be more successful in conveying information across organizational boundaries and thus be a more effective performer (Caldwell and O'Reilly 1982, p. 124).

One published study has examined the relationship between self-monitoring and job performance. Caldwell and O'Reilly (1982), using 129 field representatives of a large franchise organization, discovered that self-monitoring is positively associated with job performance. In the present investigation a positive relationship between the two constructs is hypothesized.

## Effects of Job Involvement

Individuals who are job involved consider work to be a very important part of their lives, are affected greatly by how well they perform their jobs, and are impacted personally by the entire work situation (Rabinowitz and Hall 1977). Job involvement has received extensive research attention in the psychology and organizational behavior literature but has not been investigated by sales researchers. In this study the effects of job involvement on work motivation and organizational commitment are considered.

*Job Involvement and Work Motivation.* Motivation is what energizes, directs, channels, maintains, and sustains an employee's actions and behaviors (Steers and Porter 1983). If sales personnel are committed to, and psychologically identify with, their jobs (and thus are job-involved), presumably they should be more inclined to expend effort on the job than if they are not job involved. Prior research suggests this notion may be valid (Hackman and Lawler 1971). Consequently, a positive association between job involvement and work motivation is hypothesized.

*Job Involvement and Organizational Commitment.* Individuals who are involved in their jobs should presumably be reluctant to leave them. Results of prior investigations indicate that job involvement is inversely related to job turnover of non-sales employees (Farris 1971; Patchen 1965; Siegel and Ruh 1973; Wickert 1951). In the present study, "orga-

nizational commitment'' was used as a surrogate measure of turnover because it has been determined to be a strong predictor of job turnover (Alley and Gould 1975; Kraut 1970; Newman 1974; Porter, Campon, and Smith 1976). Thus, job involvement of sales personnel is hypothesized as being positively related to organizational commitment.

### Effects of Overall Job Satisfaction

Overall job satisfaction indicates how employees feel about their work. This variable is hypothesized as being linked to salesperson job involvement and organizational commitment.

*Job Satisfaction and Job Involvement.* Guion (1958) asserts that job involved employees are not necessarily happy with their jobs; in fact, even unhappy or angry individuals may be job involved. Despite this assertion, empirical work has discovered that, in general, job satisfaction is linked positively to job involvement (Gannon and Hendrickson 1973; Hackman and Lawler 1971; Schuler 1975; Schwyhart and Smith 1972; Weissenberg and Gruenfeld 1968). Moreover, Rabinowitz and Hall (1977, p. 285) state: "Involvement increases as a result of satisfying job experiences. . . ." Thus, overall job satisfaction is hypothesized to be positively associated with salesperson job involvement.

*Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment.* Walker, Churchill, and Ford (1979) suggest that salesperson job satisfaction can impact a salesperson's desire to remain with the firm. The theoretical work of Locke (1976) and Mobley et al. (1979) also indicates that job satisfaction may influence an individual's decision to leave a job. Most research in sales and non-sales settings has found that job satisfaction is positively associated with organizational commitment (e.g., Bedian and Armenakis 1981; Dubinsky and Skinner 1984; Oliver and Brief 1977-1978). Consequently, in the present investigation it is hypothesized that salespeople's overall job satisfaction leads to organizational commitment.

### Effects of Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity

Unclear, inaccurate, and conflicting role perceptions are likely to have a deleterious effect on sales personnel (Walker, Churchill, and Ford 1979). In the present study role conflict and ambiguity are hypothesized as having a negative influence on overall job satisfaction, work motivation, and job performance.

*Role Perceptions and Job Satisfaction.* When salespeople receive incompatible job demands from role-set members or have inadequate knowledge with which to perform the job, they are likely to become disillusioned. Most published research has discovered that role conflict and ambiguity are negatively related to job satisfaction of both sales and non-sales personnel (e.g., Behrman and Perreault 1984; Churchill, Ford, and Walker 1976; Dubinsky and Skinner 1984; Kahn et al. 1964; Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman 1970; Schuler 1975).

*Role Perceptions and Work Motivation.* Walker, Churchill, and Ford (1979) suggest that role conflict and ambiguity may influence salespersons' motivation. They posit that these role constructs are inversely related to the accuracy of salespeople's expectancy (effort/performance linkage) and instrumentality (performance/reward linkage) estimates. If the estimates are inaccurate (because of a high level of experienced role conflict and ambiguity), salesperson motivation should be lower than if the estimates are accurate. Investigations have generally found that role conflict and ambiguity are related to expectancy and instrumentality estimates (House 1971; James et al. 1977; Jorgenson, Dunnette, and Pritchard 1973; Tyagi 1982).

*Role Receptions and Job Performance.* Walker, Churchill, and Ford (1979) argue that job performance is partly a function of role conflict and ambiguity experienced by sales personnel. If sales personnel have conflicting or inaccurate role perceptions, they may incorrectly judge the links between expectancies, instrumentalities, and rewards. Researchers that have examined the role perception/performance linkages have obtained mixed results (e.g., Bagozzi 1978; Behrman and Perreault 1984; Dubinsky and Mattson 1979; Lyonski and Johnson 1983; Szilagyi 1977; Szilagyi, Sims, and Keller 1976).

### Effects of Work Motivation

Theorists have posited that job performance is partly a function of an employee's motivation to perform (Campbell and Pritchard 1976; Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman 1959; Lawler 1973; Vroom 1964). In other words, employees must feel the desire to execute their job tasks and responsibilities if they are going to perform their job. Walker, Churchill, and Ford (1979) propose that motivation is one factor that influences salesperson performance. Investigations in non-selling occupations have consistently found a motivation-job performance linkage (Campbell and Pritchard 1976; Heneman and Schwab 1972). Research in sales settings also has obtained some evidence of this linkage (Bagozzi 1978; Futrell, Parasuraman, and Sager 1983; Oliver 1974). Thus, a positive association between salesperson work motivation and job performance is hypothesized in the present investigation.

### Effects of Job Performance

Considerable controversy has existed regarding whether job satisfaction leads to job performance or vice versa. Most management theorists today feel that job performance leads to job satisfaction (Lawler 1979). Research, however, has found only limited support for this linkage (Bagozzi 1978, 1980; Behrman and Perreault 1984; Franke, Behrman, and Perreault 1982; Sheridan and Slocum 1975; Wanous 1974). The present research hypothesizes that salesperson job performance leads to job satisfaction and that the relationship is positive.

## METHODOLOGY

### Sample

Data were obtained via a questionnaire sent to insurance agents located throughout the United States who sold lines of insurance marketed by the sponsor of the study. The host organization was a large, multi-line insurance company. Accompanying the questionnaire were a cover letter from the company's divisional vice president indicating support for the project and a cover letter from the researchers promising confidentiality.

Questionnaires were sent to 467 agents. Approximately three weeks after the initial mailing, a reminder postcard was sent to respondents. Usable questionnaires were returned by 120 agents for an effective response rate of 25.7 percent. Anonymity precluded a direct assessment of nonresponse bias. An indirect assessment of nonresponse bias was made, however, using a time-trend extrapolation test (Armstrong and Overton 1977). The assumption underlying this test is that nonrespondents are more like late respondents than early respondents. To implement the procedure, the sample was split into quartiles based on temporal order of questionnaire return. The first and last quartiles' responses for the variables under investigation and for age, job tenure, and education were compared using t-tests for differences between group means; the results revealed no identifiable bias for any of the variables ( $p > .05$ ).

Ninety-one percent of respondents were male. Mean respondent age was 39.1 years. Approximately 56 percent had earned at least a bachelor's degree. Mean job tenure (length in present position) was 6.6 years.

### Questionnaire

Self-monitoring was measured using a 25-item scale developed by Snyder (1974). Job involvement was assessed with four items developed by Lodahl and Kejner (1964). A six-item scale developed by Hackman and Oldham (1976) was utilized to measure work motivation. Overall job satisfaction was measured with five items from the work of Hackman and Oldham (1975). Response categories for the self-monitoring, job involvement, work motivation, and job satisfaction scales ranged from "strongly agree" (7) to "strongly disagree" (1).

Role conflict and ambiguity were measured with scales developed by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970). Eight items constitute the role conflict scale; six items, the role ambiguity scale. Respondents recorded their responses on a seven-point scale, where 7 = "very true for me" and 1 = "very false for me."

A four-item scale developed by Hrebiniak and Alutto (1972) was utilized to assess organizational commitment. Response categories were 3 = "yes, definitely would leave," 2 = "uncertain about leaving," and 1 = "no, definitely would not leave."

Agent performance was measured with prior year total earnings. Because all respondents were on a straight commission compensation program, their earnings should reflect their job performance. Compensation has been used in prior research as a measure of insurance agents' performance (Oliver 1974).

### Scale Reliability and Validity

Items within each scale were summed to arrive at a respondent's scale score. Cronbach alpha (Cronbach 1951) was calculated to determine the internal consistency of each scale. Reliability measures and information pertaining to the scales are presented in Table 1. The reliabilities range from .60 to .83 and thus are adequate for research purposes (Nunnally 1978).

Previous research has documented the validity of the scales utilized in the present study. Discriminant validity has been demonstrated for the self-monitoring (Snyder 1974), overall job satisfaction (Hackman and Oldham 1975), and work motivation scales (Hackman and Oldham 1976). The role conflict and ambiguity scales have demonstrated discriminant and predictive validity (Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman 1970) and construct and concurrent validity (Schuler, Aldag, and Brief 1977); in addition, they have been shown to be free from semantic confusion (House, Schuler, Levannoni 1983). Researchers have also demonstrated that the organizational commitment (Hrebiniak and Alutto 1972; Naughton 1981) and job involvement scales (Lodahl and Kejner 1964; Rabinowitz and Hall 1977) are valid.

### The Causal Model

The model suggested by the hypotheses is a causal model in which sales-person self-monitoring is a predictor of role perceptions and job performance; role perceptions are hypothesized as impacting overall job satisfaction, work motivation, and job performance; and job performance is hypothesized to affect overall job satisfaction. Job involvement is posited as being associated with work motivation and organizational commitment, and overall job satisfaction is hypothesized as influencing job involvement and organizational commitment. Also, work motivation is hypothesized as impacting job performance.

Given that causal relationships are being hypothesized, path analysis was used to test the model. Path analysis can be utilized to examine the effects of a set variables taken as causes on a set of variables taken as effects when the relationships are recursive (Pedhauer 1982). The structural equations corresponding to the model are as follows:

- (1)  $X_2 = \beta_{23}X_3 + e_2$
- (2)  $X_3 = \beta_{34}X_4 + \beta_{35}X_5 + \beta_{38}X_8 + e_3$
- (3)  $X_4 = \beta_{41}X_1 + e_4$
- (4)  $X_5 = \beta_{51}X_1 + e_5$
- (5)  $X_6 = \beta_{62}X_2 + \beta_{64}X_4 + \beta_{65}X_5 + e_6$
- (6)  $X_7 = \beta_{72}X_2 + \beta_{73}X_3 + e_7$
- (7)  $X_8 = \beta_{81}X_1 + \beta_{84}X_4 + \beta_{85}X_5 + \beta_{86}X_6 + e_8$

**TABLE 1**  
**ANALYSIS OF SCALES USED IN THE RESEARCH**

	Number of Items	Possible Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	Observed-Score Variance	Reliability (a)
Self-Monitoring	25	25-175	100.58	15.42	237.80	.72
Job Involvement	4	4-28	17.34	5.55	30.80	.82
Overall Job Satisfaction	5	5-35	25.50	4.95	24.50	.73
Role Conflict	8	8-56	31.21	9.40	88.31	.78
Role Ambiguity	6	6-42	13.66	4.80	23.05	.76
Work Motivation	6	6-42	36.57	3.28	10.80	.60
Organizational Commitment	4	4-12	11.02	1.50	2.25	.76

where:

- β's are standardized regression coefficients which represent the path coefficients,
- e's are residual terms,
- X's are defined in Figure 1.

Estimation of the structural equations was calculated using ordinary least squares regression (Duncan 1975). The residual path coefficients were computed as follows:

$$\sqrt{1 - R^{2j-1, 2, \dots, k}}$$

where:

- R<sup>2j-1,2,...k</sup> is the coefficient of determination for variable j with variables 1, 2, ...k that affect it.

**RESULTS**

The pairwise correlations are presented in Table 2, and the results of the path analysis are shown in Table 3. Trivial

paths were deleted using the nonsignificance criterion (Duncan 1975); only significant predictors (p < 0.5) are considered in the following discussion.

The coefficient of determination for job involvement is 0.4. As hypothesized, overall job satisfaction has a positive influence on salesperson job involvement. The small amount of variance explained in the job involvement model, however, suggests that job satisfaction has a minimal effect on this construct.

The results of the estimation of the overall job satisfaction equation indicate that role ambiguity explains 18 percent of the variance in the job satisfaction variable. As hypothesized, role ambiguity is inversely associated with overall job satisfaction. Unexpectedly, role conflict and job performance do not explain any additional variance in the job satisfaction model.

Self-monitoring, unexpectedly, does not appear to be related to role conflict or role ambiguity. Although the signs of the relationships are positive, the associations between

**TABLE 2**  
**INTERCORRELATION MATRIX OF VARIABLES IN THE STUDY**

Variable	X <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>2</sub>	X <sub>3</sub>	X <sub>4</sub>	X <sub>5</sub>	X <sub>6</sub>	X <sub>7</sub>	X <sub>8</sub>	
Self-Monitoring	X <sub>1</sub>	1.000							
Job Involvement	X <sub>2</sub>	.153	1.000						
Overall Job Satisfaction	X <sub>3</sub>	-.176*	.196*	1.000					
Role Conflict	X <sub>4</sub>	.003	.032	-.172*	1.000				
Role Ambiguity	X <sub>5</sub>	.130	-.302**	-.427**	.270**	1.000			
Work Motivation	X <sub>6</sub>	.100	.301**	.073	.099	-.089	1.000		
Organizational Commitment	X <sub>7</sub>	-.123	.028	.222**	-.300**	-.027	-.060	1.000	
Performance	X <sub>8</sub>	-.062	.219*	.170*	.127	-.288**	-.126	-.075	1.000

\*p < .05  
\*\*p < .01

**TABLE 3**  
**RESULTS FOR HYPOTHESIZED MODEL**

	Predictor Variables	Hypothesized Direction	Path Coefficients Full Model	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> Full Model	Path Coefficients Trimmed Model	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> Trimmed Model
Job Involvement (X <sub>2</sub> )	Overall Job Satisfaction	+	.196*	.04	.196*	.04
Overall Job Satisfaction (X <sub>3</sub> )	Role Conflict	-	-.077	.20	-	.18
	Role Ambiguity	-	-.404**		-.427**	
	Performance	+	.056		-	
Role Conflict (X <sub>4</sub> )	Self-Monitoring	-	.003	.00	-	-
Role Ambiguity (X <sub>5</sub> )	Self-Monitoring	-	.130	.02	-	-
Work Motivation (X <sub>6</sub> )	Job Involvement	+	.295**	.12	.301**	.09
	Role Conflict	-	.125		-	
	Role Ambiguity	-	-.066		-	
Organizational Commitment (X <sub>7</sub> )	Overall Job Satisfaction	+	.221*	.05	.222*	.05
	Job Involvement	+	.005		-	
Job Performance (X <sub>8</sub> )	Self-Monitoring	+	.033	.18	-	.15
	Work Motivation	+	-.224*		-.178*	
	Role Conflict	-	.257**		.235**	
	Role Ambiguity	-	-.398**		-.356**	

\*p ≤ .05

\*\*p ≤ .01

role conflict and self-monitoring and role ambiguity and self-monitoring are very weak.

Only one of three variables has a direct effect on salesperson work motivation. As expected, job involvement is positively related to work motivation, and it explains 9 percent of the variance of this variable. Role conflict and ambiguity have no additional effect on the variance explained in this model.

Five percent of the variance in the organizational commitment equation is explained by overall job satisfaction. Overall job satisfaction is positively associated with organizational commitment. Job involvement, though, explains no additional variance in the organizational commitment model.

The coefficient of determination for the job performance model is 15 percent. Three of the four predictor variables are associated with performance. As hypothesized, role ambiguity is negatively related to job performance. Unexpectedly, work motivation is inversely associated and role conflict positively associated with job performance. Self-monitoring does not explain any additional variance in the job performance model.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this investigation was to examine a model of salesperson performance. Components of the model consisted of (1) previously hypothesized determinants of salesperson performance – role conflict, role ambiguity, and work motivation; (2) a previously hypothesized consequence of salesperson performance – job satisfaction; (3) selected antecedents of salesperson organizational commitment; and (4) two variables new to salesperson research – job involvement and self-monitoring (salesperson adaptability). Although path analysis results suggest that significant relationships exist in all seven models tested, the explanatory power of the variables is low (R<sup>2</sup> values range from .04 to .18). The following provides a discussion of the results.

### Job Involvement Model

The positive relationship between salesperson overall job satisfaction and job involvement indicates that higher levels of job satisfaction lead to higher levels of job involvement. This finding is consistent with previous empirical work (e.g., Gannon and Hendrickson 1973). Thus, attempts by sales managers to increase salespeople's overall job satisfaction should result in greater job involvement. Increases in job involvement are reflected in the importance sales personnel place in their job.

### Overall Job Satisfaction Model

The results of the regression model which tested predictors of overall job satisfaction suggest that decreases in role ambiguity increase salespersons' overall job satisfaction. Because role ambiguity occurs when a salesperson has inadequate knowledge or information with which to perform the job, sales managers should increase the information available to sales personnel. For example, sales managers could provide job training for salespeople, communicate company policies and procedures to them, conduct performance appraisals with them focusing primarily on critical job tasks and responsibilities, and use group meetings to discuss expectations of their role partners.

The lack of a relationship between role conflict and overall job satisfaction suggests that incompatible demands do not decrease the job satisfaction of salespersons. Behrman and Perreault (1984) suggest, however, that although some previous research in sales settings has identified no relationship between job satisfaction and role conflict, perhaps role conflict measures must tap more than just intersender conflict (which was the construct measured in the present investigation). Similarly, although the lack of a relationship between job performance and overall job satisfaction is consistent with some prior research (Behrman and Perreault 1984; Franke, Behrman, and Perreault 1982), this result may be attributable to these two variables having common antecedents. Role ambiguity alone, though, explains 18 percent of the variance in overall job satisfaction.

### Role Perception Models

Self monitoring is not a useful predictor of role conflict or role ambiguity. In fact, the product-moment correlations displayed in Table 2 indicate that self-monitoring is related to only one variable in the study – overall job satisfaction. A possible explanation for the absence of a relationship is that although high self-monitoring salespeople may be sensitive to social cues, being sensitive and adaptive to cues does not necessarily help them change the environmental factors causing the role conflict and role ambiguity. Thus, if actions taken by a salesperson do not affect role conflict or role ambiguity, the ability to adapt behavior to situational cues may not be important.

### Work Motivation Model

When work motivation was predicted from an equation that included job involvement, role conflict, and role ambiguity, only job involvement was significantly (positively) related to work motivation. The lack of relationships between the role perception constructs and work motivation is not consistent with previous research (e.g., House 1971). These unexpected results may support the argument for better role conflict measures. In addition, because role ambiguity is significantly related to job involvement (see Tables 2), it may be redundant with variance explained by the job involvement

predictor. The job involvement/work motivation linkage suggests that sales managers should seek to augment their salespeople's job involvement so as to increase work motivation. Job involvement might be enhanced by creating work assignments that permit sales personnel to experience challenge and variety and by establishing supervisory practices that allow participation (Behling and Schriesheim 1976). Davis (1967) argues that "a person who participates is ego-involved instead of merely task-involved" and therefore experiences higher levels of motivation.

### Organizational Commitment Model

The model of organizational commitment suggests that overall job satisfaction is a useful predictor of salesperson organizational commitment, but job involvement is not. Salespeople with higher levels of overall job satisfaction appear to have higher levels of organizational commitment. By increasing job satisfaction of sales personnel, turnover costs may subsequently be reduced. Augmenting their job involvement, however, apparently will not help lower turnover costs of sales personnel.

### Job Performance Model

Three of the four hypothesized antecedents of job performance remain in the trimmed model of job performance and explain 15 percent of the variance. The variable with the largest path coefficient is role ambiguity. This finding is consistent with theory and past research (e.g., Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman 1970) – inadequate knowledge regarding the selling task has a negative impact on job performance of sales personnel.

The positive relationship between role conflict and job performance is not consistent with the study hypothesis. Similar results, however, are reported by Behrman and Perreault (1984). In fact, researchers have suggested that because role conflict is a basic and unavoidable characteristic of the selling job, effective performance depends on the salesperson's confronting and coping with that conflict (Franke, Behrman, and Perreault 1982). A similar argument, that the self-selection process has placed individuals who thrive on high conflict environments in selling positions, may explain the lack of a relationship between role conflict and overall job satisfaction and work motivation. Thus, attempts to reduce role conflict of sales personnel, while having no apparent effect on overall job satisfaction or work motivation, may decrease performance, and, therefore, should be carefully considered by sales managers.

The negative relationship between salesperson work motivation and job performance is also in conflict with the study hypothesis. A potential explanation for this contradictory finding may be because salesperson performance is multidimensional in nature and is impacted by many factors (e.g., top management actions, competition) that are not under the individual salesperson's control (Walker, Churchill, and Ford 1979). Consequently, the performance measure



used here (prior year total earnings) may have been too narrow in scope and affected by too many uncontrollable factors, so that the "true" work motivation/job performance linkage might have been masked in this investigation.

The unexpected findings – a positive relationship between role conflict and job performance and a negative relationship between work motivation and job performance – may be due to low correlations in the data and multi-collinearity. Table 2 indicates that the correlations between role conflict, work motivation, and job performance are nonsignificant. Thus, the significant, but counterintuitive, findings in the path analysis may be artifacts due to characteristics of the data.

The lack of association between self-monitoring and job performance suggests that a salesperson's ability to adapt to the social situation does not impact his or her performance. This finding contradicts conventional wisdom and sales researchers' propositions (e.g., Weitz 1981). Given that this study was the first attempt at examining the self-monitoring/job performance linkage in a sales context, additional research should explore this potential relationship before discarding the importance of the adaptability/job performance linkage in selling.

### Limitations

The study has some important limitations. First, the failure to obtain results that are consistent with theory may be due to measurement error. Although path analysis is appropriate as a method of testing the model, it does not allow a correction for attenuation due to unreliability in measurements (as causal modeling would, for example). Second, because both the independent and dependent variables are self-reported measures from the same person and thus are likely to create a common method variance, the strengths of the relationships may be overstated. Finally, while the self-monitoring scale was found to be unrelated to role conflict, role ambiguity, and performance, the findings may be due to characteristics of the scale. The self-monitoring scale is a measure of adaptive behavior, motivation to adapt, and skills in adapting; consequently, (a) some researchers have questioned the reliability and validity of the scale (Lennox and Wolfe 1984), and (b) development of a better measure of selling adaptability may be appropriate.

### CONCLUSION

The model of salesperson performance investigated here provides a basis for increasing our current understanding of the sales management process. The components of the study which are based on past research confirm some of the hypothesized relationships. Yet, they also provide insight regarding questions raised in past work (about the role conflict construct, for example) and suggest new questions (about the work motivation construct, for example). The compo-

nents of the study which are new to sales management research provide support for the investigation of new variables (such as job involvement), and offer disappointing, but useful, results regarding the efficacy of self-monitoring as a predictor of role perceptions and job performance. Future research should continue to explore the linkages described in this study and to develop a model of greater predictive power.

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